



Greetings from the NIH Office of the Senior Official for Privacy! With holiday travel right around the corner, it is easy to forget the importance of safeguarding your privacy and personal information. This issue of *The Privacy Pulse* provides helpful tips to make sure your season stays merry and bright.

Before You Go Out of Town - Plan Ahead:

- Contact the post office and put a hold on your mail and suspend magazine/newspaper subscriptions;
- Ask a neighbor or friend to sign for package deliveries and remove fliers and junk mail that may pile up;
- Keep a car parked in the driveway or invite your neighbor to use your parking space;
- Set your lights and television on a timer and install motion-detector spotlights to illuminate your home;
- To minimize hiding places for burglars, trim branches to 6 feet off the ground and shrubs to 3 feet;
- Do not leave expensive decorations on display or gifts where they can be viewed from a window;
- Take the time to break down boxes and recycle them or put them on the curb over time and inconspicuously;
- Hire a young entrepreneur to shovel your driveway and sidewalk of snow and ice;
- Secure financial information and valuable documents (checkbooks, passports, wills) in a fire-safe box;
- Clean out your wallet to remove unnecessary credit cards, vehicle/voter registration and social security card;
- If your health insurance card contains your SSN, make a note of the policy number and required information;
- Resist the urge to post location updates to your iPhone or upload vacation photos to Facebook;
- Password protect your personal computer/laptop and back up personal data on an encrypted thumb drive;
- Install computer recovery and data protection software so that if your PC/laptop is stolen, it can be traced;
- If you have an alarm or closed-circuit video surveillance system, activate it before leaving the house;
- If when you travel, you plan to take a laptop with you, label it to distinguish it from others; keep an eye on it as it moves through airport security checkpoints; do not leave it unattended at any time; keep it off the floor or at least between your feet; and,
- If you plan to take a camera and other electronic devices with you, carry them with you on the plane.

When Shopping Online - Stop, Think and Click:

- Know who you're dealing with - illegitimate websites do not provide an address or working phone number;
- Avoid accessing websites from unsecure WiFi "hot spots";
- Make sure the websites you access are on a secure server – look for the "s" in (<https://www.website.com>);
- When logging onto your personal accounts, do not click the box that asks to remember your settings;
- Do not reply to or click on links in any e-mail asking for personal information or verification of a credit card;
- Before downloading free software, read the fine print and look over the privacy policy; and,
- Before agreeing to any financial transaction, check with the BBB to make sure the business is reliable.

To make accessing the OMA Privacy SharePoint Website more convenient, we invite you to bookmark it on your desktop: <http://oma.nih.gov/dms/programs/privacy/default.aspx>

If you have feedback on this e-mail blast or ideas for future topics, please contact us at: privacy@mail.nih.gov